



## News Release

**For Immediate Release**

Thursday, April 20, 2006

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### Utah Selected as National Kick-off State for Infant Immunization Week

**(Salt Lake City, UT)** – The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) partnered with the Utah County Health Department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), today, to kick off National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW), April 22-29, in Provo. The kick-off included a special visit from Dr. Melinda Wharton, Acting Deputy Director of the National Immunization Program (NIP). Utah was selected as one of the national kick-off states for NIIW and is participating in various events and activities around the state in collaboration with the NIP.

Dr. Wharton, spoke to healthcare professionals about immunization barriers, vaccine safety, and the need to continue vaccination efforts at the Utah Valley Regional Medical Center. Later, she encouraged parents and immunization providers to stay on track at a “Love Them, Protect Them, Immunize Them” event at the Utah County Health Department.

“We can now protect children from more vaccine preventable diseases than ever before, but unfortunately, a substantial number of children in Utah and throughout the U.S. still aren’t fully immunized,” said Dr. Wharton. “Parents and providers need to work together to fully immunize the children in their care. Parents can talk to their child’s doctor about immunizations and keep a record of each immunization. Providers can avoid missed immunization opportunities by checking children’s records at every visit and ensure that children have received all recommended vaccines.”

Utah County Health Department also revealed plans for tracking the immunizations of Utah’s first birth of 2006 and showcased Utah’s new Electronic Immunization Reminder Service. The reminder service is an online service at [www.immunize-utah.org](http://www.immunize-utah.org), where parents can register to receive email reminders about their children’s vaccinations by providing a child’s birth date and a current email address.

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Utah continues to face several challenges in getting children immunized on time, including parent's schedules, large families, lack of insurance coverage and the expanding vaccine schedule. Utah County plays a significant role in efforts to increase immunization levels because it is one of the fastest growing counties in Utah with a large number of parents with young children. "Every effort we can make to help parents immunize their children is one more step to improving immunization levels and reducing the chance of disease outbreaks," says Linda Abel, Utah Immunization Program Manager, UDOH. "The electronic immunization reminder service will help busy parents stay on track."

National childhood immunization coverage levels continue at record high levels, with about 81 percent of the nation's 19-to-35-month-old children receiving all the recommended vaccinations. Unfortunately, Utah's immunization rates lag behind the national rate at 71 percent.

In recognition of NIIW, several counties and local immunization coalitions across Utah will hold activities for children in childcare settings, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clinics, community health centers, recreational centers, libraries, schools and health departments. Dr. Wharton will travel to St. George on April 21 for additional NIIW activities.

To participate in NIIW events, contact the Utah Immunization Program at (801) 538-9450 or your local health department. For more information on immunization, contact your local health care provider, public health department or the Utah Immunization Hotline at 1-800-275-0659.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*